

opinion

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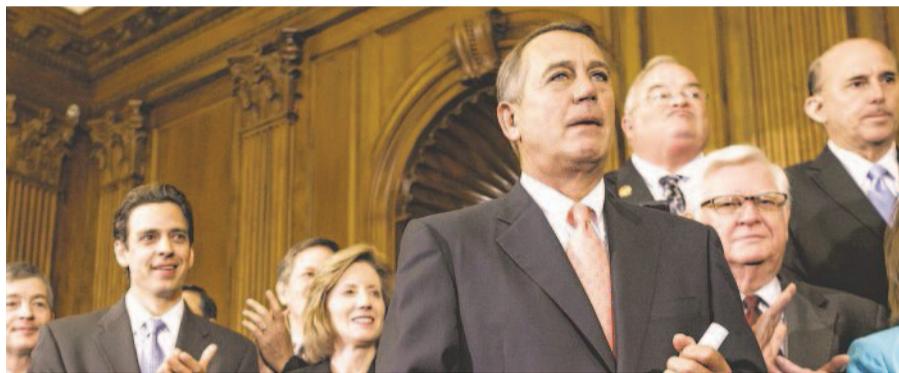
BUDGET TANTRUM IS IRRESPONSIBLE

In Sunday's Enquirer, we urged people to give the Affordable Care Act a chance to work. We heard from many readers who have already benefited from the law by, for instance, adding their young-adult children to their policies, and others who were eager for features such as the end of denials for pre-existing conditions.

Today, we'd like to urge our Congressional delegation to do the same thing. U.S. Reps. Thomas Massie, Steve Chabot, Brad Wenstrup and other local officials have been vocal in the effort to defund Obamacare. Now they are foolishly linking it to efforts to shut down the federal government.

Everyone representing the region in the House voted Friday with the House Republican majority to keep the government running after Sept. 30, but only if Obamacare is defunded. Otherwise, they appear willing to shut the government down.

It's not just supporters of President Barack Obama who think this is a bad idea. Republican strategist Karl Rove wrote in the Wall Street Journal, "Going down that (defunding) road would strengthen the president while alienating independents. It is an ill-conceived tactic, and Republicans should reject it." That paper's reliably conservative editorial board likened



House Speaker John Boehner is cheered Friday after House Republicans pass a bill tying continuing government operations to defunding the Affordable Care Act. AP

the effort to a kamikaze mission and noted, "Kamikaze missions rarely turn out well, least of all for the pilots."

We'd like to remind our local lawmakers of a few things. The first reiterates what we said Sunday: Obamacare is the law of the land. Congress passed it; the president signed it into law; the U.S. Supreme Court upheld it; and American voters re-elected the law's architect in an election which featured plenty of debate over health insurance.

The second is that their tactic won't work. U.S. Senate leaders have called the House bill "dead" and "a waste of time," and even if it made it

through the Senate – which it won't – the president has promised to veto it.

Third, lawmakers have a lot to lose in this showdown, and we, their constituents, have even more. Perhaps Rep. John Boehner remembers the 1995 shutdown of the federal government and who suffered the most: veterans and federal retirees whose benefits were threatened, travelers who wanted to visit national parks or obtain passports to go abroad, small businesses that had contracts with the government.

Polls show that voters – even those opposed to Obamacare – do not want the federal government to shut down. They'd prefer their elected officials

to be working on the priorities they were sent to Washington to fight for: job creation, national security, immigration and other issues.

Even if the House comes to its senses in the next week and cooperates in the effort to keep the government operating, there's another threat looming. Obamacare opponents have also discussed tying its delay to a bill that would raise the U.S. debt limit. That issue is scheduled to surface in late October or early November, and the stakes are even higher than in the federal budget standoff.

Raising the debt ceiling will enable the government to continue borrowing; a failure to raise it could shake world financial markets and lead to a downgrade in the government's credit rating or to default. Experts warn it could take years or even decades to recover from the consequences of that.

In the case of the Affordable Care Act, our democracy worked the way it's supposed to. Now opponents must be willing to accept a law they don't like. To throw a tantrum and threaten the national economy because they don't agree with the results of the process is irresponsible, dangerous and unworthy of the office the voters elected them to. ■

Bill Kagler always took time for this young journalist



PATRICIA GALLAGHER NEWBERRY

Patricia Gallagher Newberry is a senior lecturer in journalism at Miami University.

In October 1986, I hired on as a brand-new, green as green could be business reporter for The Enquirer. A few days into the job, the Kroger Co. announced that its president, Bill Kagler, had resigned. The company

would not comment beyond its press release, which said Kagler was leaving "due to personal differences over the management of the company" with then-Chairman Lyle Everingham.

My editor, the intrepid Kerry Klumpe, naturally wanted more.

I couldn't find Kagler's home number – but did, somehow, land a home address. (If memory serves, it was in the white pages of the phone book.) Klumpe told me to get in the car and go get a quote.

Armed with a map (no Google back then), I found my way from 617 Vine St. to some north-of-I-275 house on

Snider Road.

With my hands sweating and my stomach roiling, I soon knocked on the Kagler door, where Mr. and Mrs. greeted me, let me in, sat me down and offered the most gracious of "no comments."

In the months and years that followed, I would reach out to Kagler from time to time about news coming out of Kroger or the grocery industry overall. He'd usually take the call and offer a pithy quote or two about whatever I was working on.

At the time, I probably thought I was a pretty clever reporter to get a Big Name like Bill Kagler to talk to

me.

When I read his obituary in The Enquirer last week – gone, at age 81, after his long service to Kroger, then Skyline, and just about every good cause in town – I finally learned why the hard-charging, in-demand CEO could spare a few minutes and a good quote for a young journalist: That was him, 20-some years earlier. He'd worked as a newspaper reporter (with a stint at The Enquirer) before he moved into Kroger public relations and started his way up the corporate ladder.

Some journalist I was: I never knew. ■

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